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Washington State Senate

Senator Jim Honeyford
15th Legislative District

All of Klickitat and
Skamania counties,
south Yakima County
and southeast Clark County

February 5, 2007

Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne:

You have received an application from the Spokane Tribe seeking permission to operate a gaming facility outside the boundaries of their reservation. I am writing to urge you to deny their request.

As you are probably aware, tribal gaming is a large industry in Washington. Our state governors have signed compacts with twenty-seven of the twenty-nine recognized tribes, resulting in twenty-five tribal casinos operating in this state.

Net receipts from industries that formerly thrived are being reduced each year, as tribal gaming expands. For example, in 2000, net receipts for tribal casinos accounted for approximately thirty-one percent of all net receipts from gambling activities. In 2006, tribal casinos increased their share to sixty-five percent.

The Spokane Tribe has finally negotiated a compact with Governor Gregoire. I am opposed to the expansion of gambling found in the compact. Even worse, I believe that the reason that this tribe has finally agreed to a compact with the Governor is that it is a necessary step for them to obtain approval for off-reservation gambling.

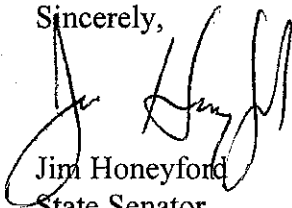
The Governor's compact with the Spokanes includes a provision requiring the Governor to act in good faith when considering any off-reservation gaming request. Since the Kalispel Tribe has already been granted such a privilege, I am concerned that Governor Gregoire is inclined to allow the Spokanes the same privilege. If she does not, as such an action would be unpopular in this state, it appears that the Spokanes and the Governor, having agreed to the "good faith" language in the compact, are seeking to give the Spokanes standing to sue, or to threaten suit in order to compel the Governor to approve their application.

Therefore, I believe that it is critical that the application be stopped at the U.S. Department of the Interior. As you pursue the two-step 2719 process, I ask that you seriously consider the impact of the tribe's request on the Spokane area, including the effect on non-tribal gaming, and the effect on the Kalispel Tribe, who has been operating a facility in Airway Heights, after approval for off-reservation gaming in 1998.

Only three tribes in the nation have been allowed such an off-reservation facility, one of them in Washington state. If the Spokanes are approved, half of all off-reservation gaming in the nation will be located in Washington. This continued expansion of gambling is bad public policy for the people of our state.

I respectfully request that you deny the application submitted by the Spokane Tribe for off-reservation gaming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Honeyford", is written over the typed name.

Jim Honeyford
State Senator
15th Legislative District

/jkh